

The Birth of Christ

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THE consideration of the mystery of Our Saviour's birth is calculated to stir up in us a salutary fear, together with a solid and internal joy. The sight of this Saviour lying in a manger affords us powerful motives for the one and the other. If you are of those who, seduced by false maxims, quit the way of salvation, be afraid, because this mystery will lay open to you afflicting truths. If you are, or would be, one of those who seek God in spirit and truth, be glad, because this mystery will reveal to you infinite treasures of grace and mercy.

The salvation of man must needs always begin with his fear of the Lord. It is with reason, therefore, that, proclaiming this great mystery of the Nativity, I should point out the most powerful motives for this wholesome fear. Fear, then, ye men of the world; that is, ye who, intoxicated with the spirit of the world, lead a life conformable to its laws and maxims; fear, because the very Saviour who is born to you, Saviour as He is, is for you the reverse of a Saviour; fear, because He is a Saviour but a Saviour who comes to be your shame and condemnation; fear, because this Saviour, incapable of indifference, if He does not save you, must necessarily ruin you.

You want Him to exert His saving power in your regard; but, at the same time, by a strange opposition of sentiment and conduct, you are not solicitous that He free you from your sins. For this, nevertheless, and for this only, He came as Our Saviour. If He free you not from your sins, and if, far from desiring to be freed from their dominion, you be infatuated with your slavery, this Divine Saviour is no more for you than a merely nominal Saviour, and all the adoration you pay Him is delusion and hypocrisy. Thou shalt call His name Jesus, says the

Angel to Joseph; and the reason is, because He shall save His people from their sins (Math. i.). He comes not to redeem us from the adversities and misfortunes of the present life; we should be unworthy of the profession and title of Christians if we made that the criterion of His grace and power of saving us. But He comes to deliver us from the corruptions, the irregularities, and the errors of the world; from the yoke of our passions; from the concupiscence of the flesh; from an overweening opinion of our own worth; from criminal associations, hatred and aversion, corroding rancour, and malignant jealousy. These are our enemies; and none but a God had the power of rescuing us from such captivity. Let us cry out, with the Prophet: Hasten, O Lord, lift me up from the abyss into which I am fallen.

OUR CO-OPERATION REQUIRED.

We desire that this God, make flesh, should save us, but we desire it without our being given any trouble. That is another contradiction and another motive for fear; for He is Our Saviour only on the condition that we co-operate with Him in the work of our salvation. St. Augustine observes that He made us indeed, but will not save us, without our own concurrence; He requires that the work of salvation, or rather the fulfilment of this great work, depend upon ourselves, and that we share in the labor without priding ourselves on having done so. As Saviour, He did penance for us, but still requires that we do penance for ourselves. As Saviour, He prayed, suffered, and merited for us; but He requires that our prayers and tears and works, sanctified by His, accomplish in us the work of Redemption, of which He is the author, and which, without our co-operation, He will not accomplish. As Saviour, He became a victim for us in the crib, where He began His voluntary immolation; but He requires that we be ready to immolate ourselves. It is therefore necessary, in order to be saved, that we take pains ourselves. This He made a law; a law which St. Paul so exactly complied with that he said that he fulfilled in his flesh what was wanting in the sufferings of Christ (Col. i.).-

In fine, you want Him to save you, but you would not have it by the means that He has pointed out to you. Although these means have been concerted and resolved on in the unerring decree of His eternal wisdom, they are displeasing to you; although they have been sanctioned in His sacred person and authorized by His example, you do not relish them. And what are they? Detachment from the world and its vanities, poverty of spirit, humility of heart, mortification of the senses, austerity of life. That language is grating to you. You would have means more proportioned to your worldly notions and more agreeable to your inclinations; and I say that for that reason you ought to fear; because it is an undoubted truth that this Incarnate God will not save you by other means than those that He Himself has specified, and that those which He has specified will not save you so long as you follow your worldly ideas and inclinations.

SUPPOSE ANOTHER KIND OF SAVIOUR.

Tell me, if Almighty God had sent a Saviour different from Him in whom we believe and hope; that is, if a Saviour had come from Heaven, favorable to corrupt nature and diametrically opposite to Him whom we adore; if, instead of declaring that this Messiah was a poor and humble Saviour born in a stable, I were to assure you that you had been greatly mistaken, He being quite of an opposite character; that His birth was attended with pomp and splendor, with opulence and abundance, with all the ease and pleasures of life; that to those means He had attached your eternal welfare, and upon them had undertaken to found His religion; if (by a reversal of things, which indeed is impossible but which we may imagine) the case were thus, and this supposition were a reality, tell me what you would have to reform in your conduct, or to correct and amend in your sentiments, in order to conform to this new gospel? In changing your belief would you be obliged to change your conduct? Would you find yourselves under the necessity of renouncing your present state for a state of perfection which this Saviour would point out to you?

Or, on the contrary, without any alteration from what you are, would you not, in that supposition, be perfect Christians? In such case might I not say with propriety: "Fear not; for behold I bring you tidings of great joy; a Saviour is born to you; a Saviour to your liking and after your desires, a Saviour whose religion tallies so perfectly with your taste and maxims and with the rules of life the world prescribes; a Saviour whose principles will allow you to give full scope to your passions, and who, far from contradicting, will approve and authorize the indulgence of those passions? "As He is such a Saviour, be comforted."

Should I not, I say, be justified in addressing you in that strain? Alas! Christians, I own you would, in that new system have good reason to rejoice. But you are too intelligent not to see that what in that case would give you comfort ought to fill you now with apprehension. My duty obliges me, as I preach a contrary Gospel, to use also a contrary language. At the hazard of disturbing the joy of the Church, which is good and holy, I must disturb yours, which considering the blindness with which you proceed, is false and presumptuous. I must bid you be afraid, nay, tremble with fear, because a Saviour is born to you, but a Saviour who stands in opposition to your inclinations, an enemy to the world and to worldly enjoyments—a poor, humble, suffering Saviour. Afflicting truth! But for whom? For you, worldling; that is, for you, wealthy man, possessed of riches and intoxicated with your fortune; for you, ambitious man, infatuated with splendor and an admirer only of earthly pomp; for you, sensual and voluptuous man, whose love is unmeasurable though confined to yourself, and whose only occupation is the gratifying of your passions and the indulging of your lusts.

A MYSTERY OF JOY.

But let us consider the mystery of comfort which is discernible in the birth of the Man-God. The weak are selected to confound the power of the great; the simple to confound the arguments of the wise; the mean and despicable, according to the notion of the world, to confound that which is most illustrious and most eminent

in the world. Such was the commencement of the Christian religion; such was the original of God's Church, which was shut up within the narrow limits of a stable, since only there was Jesus Christ as yet known. And this, ye great ones of the world who hear me, would have been sufficient to plunge you into the deepest affliction, if God's amiable Providence had not provided for your wants. Be of good heart and convinced of the immensity of His mercies; proceed to enjoy the comfort of the tidings of great joy. How exposed soever you may be to the vice and corruption of the world, and how remote soever you may seem to be from the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ rejects you not—Jesus Christ who came into the world to draw you closer to Himself. How contrary soever to that of the Blessed Jesus your condition in life may appear to be, it is still in your power, remaining what you are, to resemble Him in holiness. How dangerous soever human grandeur may be, and whatever malediction has been pronounced against riches, they may serve you as the means of honoring Jesus Christ and of rendering Him the particular worship He expects.

Although Jesus Christ, by a special choice, would be born in lowliness and humiliation, He cannot be said to have therefore proscribed the great ones of the earth; nor am I afraid of offending your delicacy by saying that from His very birth, far from despising them, He sought after them and brought them to a knowledge of Himself and even indulged them in a special attachment to Him. This incontestably appears from the Gospel; for when this saving God calls shepherds and the poor to surround His cradle, He calls also the Magi, powerful and opulent, nay, dignified with royalty, if we may believe tradition. When an Angel from Heaven is deputed to the shepherds, a resplendent star is made to guide the Magi; when the shepherds quit their flocks to adore, to acknowledge Him, the Magi quit their country, possessions and rank; under the veil of human infancy He makes His Divinity known to both; He excludes not the great by preferring the little to them. Ye men of the world, whoever you are or whatever your rank in life may be, your condition debars you not from God, nor

does your God condemn it. It is not a bar between you and your God, for He supplies it with abundant graces; your God condemns it not, for He sanctified it in the Magi, and reformed it in you. He condemns the abuse and irregularity of your condition; He condemns the luxury, the effeminacy, the hardheartedness, the impiety of your condition, not the condition itself. As the God of all ranks, who came for the salvation of all mankind, from His cradle, in which He already performs the functions of a Saviour, He demands that great and small, rich and poor, masters and servants, appear in His retinue.

IMITATE THE DIVINE CHILD'S HOLINESS.

But, after, all what analogy can His poverty bear to opulence, His abasement to grandeur, His distress to the ease and comforts of life? To this I answer by a second proposition which I have already advanced: It is in your power, remaining what you are, to resemble in holiness the Infant Jesus. You may, as Christians, be at the same time great and humble, rich but poor in spirit, powerful and yet of a meek and generous heart. Now the moment you join humility to greatness, meekness to power, and detachment to the possession and enjoyment of riches, your state no longer conflicts with that of your Redeemer. On the contrary, you have by these means the advantage of being able to conform most perfectly to this model of the predestined. For the character of the Saviour is not merely to be poor and humble, but to be great and humble at the same time; or, rather, to be humble and to be greatness itself, as, notwithstanding His humility, He is the Son of the Most High. A great man who, without derogating from his quality, practises the humility prescribed by his religion; a great man who is little in his own eyes and is perpetually mindful that he is a sinner and mortal, and who walks before His God with respect and fear; a great man who can say, like David, Lord, my heart is not puffed up, nor are my eyes haughty, a great man actuated by these sentiments is a perfect imitator of the great God whose adorable abasement we commemorate on Christmas Day. A great man in these dispositions is a true Christian, a Christian that humbles himself like the Divine Infant.

My third proposition was that it depends on the rich man himself to make his riches serve to pay the Infant Jesus the particular worship He expects. As God and humble, He demands honor and glory; as God and poor, He requires assistance and relief.

THE HOMAGE OF THE GREAT.

As God and humble, He demands honor and glory; and accordingly He seeks worshipers from among the Gentiles. But what sort of worshipers? Men distinguished by their dignity, who, prostrate and lowly in His presence, do Him more honor and procure Him more glory than the shepherds of Judea with all their zeal. Nothing, in fact, can do Him greater honor and procure Him more glory than the homage of the great. Why were you invested with authority in the world? Why did God place you in your present elevation? What is it not in your power to do for Him? To you it is owing that the doctrine and religion of this God-Man are held in veneration on earth.

As God and poor, He demands relief; no longer for Himself, but for His members, which are the poor. Without having, like the Magi, to go a long distance to find Him and offer Him gifts, you may find Him in the midst of you. The poor who surround you and whom you see, and still more those whom you do not see and who cannot approach you, are in your regard the same Jesus Christ to whom the Magi made an offering of gold and frankincense. We learn from the doctrine of faith that what is given to the poor is given to Jesus Christ, and will more merit when put into their hands than put into His without any intervention. Hence your riches can become salutary and can lose the characteristic of reprobation which the Scripture gives them. From being treasures of iniquity and obstacles to salvation, they can be made material for that most excellent virtue, charity. Jesus Christ, says St. Chrysostom, is too just and faithful to execrate riches which He Himself solicits at your hands. Blessed is he, cries the royal Psalmist, who understandeth concerning the needy and the poor! And I say the same thing, and with greater reason, for it is especially for the Christian that the poor are a

mystery of faith. But, coming to the root of the matter, I add: Blessed is he who understandeth concerning the poverty and humility of a God made Man.

The High Feast of Christ's Nativity

From Caxton's "Golden Legend"

WHEN the world had endured five thousand and nine hundred years, after Eusebius, the holy saint, Octavian the Emperor commanded that all the world should be described, so that he might know how many cities, how many towns, and how many persons he had in all the universal world. Then was so great peace in the earth that all the world was obedient to him. And therefore Our Lord would be born in that time, that it should be known that He brought peace from heaven. And this Emperor commanded that every man should go into the towns, cities or villages from whence he was of, and should bring with him a penny in acknowledgment that he was subject to the empire of Rome. And by so many pence as should be found received, should be known the number of the persons.

Joseph, which then was of the lineage of David, and dwelled in Nazareth, went into the city of Bethlehem, and led with him the Virgin Mary, his spouse. And when they were come thither, because the hostellries were all taken up, they were constrained to be without in a common place where all people went. And there was a stable for an ass that he brought with him, and for an ox. In that night Our Blessed Lady and Mother of God was delivered of Our Blessed Saviour upon the hay that lay in the rack. At which nativity Our Lord shewed many marvels.

Because that the world was in so great peace, the Romans had made a temple, which was named the Temple of Peace, in which they counseled with Apollo to know how long it should stand and endure. Apollo answered to them that it should stand as long till a maid had brought forth and borne a child. And therefore they did write

on the portal of the temple: "Lo! this is the Temple of Peace that ever shall endure." For they supposed well that a maid might never bear nor bring forth a child. This temple that same time that Our Lady was delivered and Our Lord born, overthrew and fell all down. Of which Christian men afterward made in the same place a church of Our Lady, which is called *Sancta Maria Rotunda*.

Also the same night, as recordeth Innocent the Third, Pope, there sprang and soured in Rome a well, or a fountain, and ran largely all that night and all that day unto the river of Rome called Tiber. Also after that, recordeth St. John Chrysostom, the three kings were in this night in their orisons and prayers upon a mountain, when a star appeared by them which had the form of a right fair child, which had a cross in his forehead, which said to these three kings that they should go to Jerusalem, and there they should find the son of the Virgin, God and Man, which theh was born. Also there appeared in the Orient three suns, which little and little assembled together, and were all on one. As it is signified to us that these three things are the Godhead, the soul and the body, which be in three natures assembled in one person.

Also Octavian the Emperor, like as Innocent recordeth, that he was much desired of his council and of his people, that he should do men worship him as God. For never had there been before him so great a master and lord of the world as he was. Then the Emperor sent for a prophetess named Sibyl, for to demand of her if there were any so great and like him in the earth, or if any should come after him. Thus at the hour of midday she beheld the heaven, and saw a circle of gold about the sun, and in the middle of the circle a maid holding a child in her arms. Then she called the Emperor and showed it him. When Octavian saw that he marveled over much, whereof Sibyl said to him: "*Hic puer major te est, ipsum adora*": "This Child is greater lord than thou art; worship him." Then when the Emperor understood that this Child was greater lord than he was, he would not be worshiped as God, but worshiped this Child that should be born. Wherefore the Christian men made a church of the same chamber of the Emperor, and named it *Ara Coeli*.

After this it happened on a night as a great master which is of great authority in Scripture, which is named Bartholomew, recordeth that the Rod of Engadi, which is by Jerusalem, which beareth balm, flowered this night and bare fruit, and gave liquor of balm. After this came the angel and appeared to the shepherds that kept their sheep, and said to them: "I announce and show to you a great joy; for the Saviour of the world is in this night born, in the city of Bethlehem; there may ye find Him wrapt in clouts." And anon, as the angel had said this, a great multitude of angels appeared with him and began to sing: "Honor, glory and health be to God on high, and in the earth peace to men of good-will." Then said the shepherds, let us go to Bethelehem and see this thing. And when they came they found like as the angel had said.

This feast of the Nativity of Our Lord is one of the greatest feasts of all the year, and for to tell all the miracles that Our Lord hath showed, it should contain a whole book; but at this time I shall leave and pass over save one thing that I have heard once preached of a worshipful doctor, that what person being in clean life desire on this day a boon of God, as far as it is rightful and good for him, Our Lord at the reverence of this blessed high feast of His Nativity will grant it to him. Then let us always make us in clean life at this feast, that we may so please Him that after this short life we may come unto His bliss. Amen.

The Puritans and Tolerance

THOMAS F. MEEHAN.

From the N. C. W. C. News Service.

WERE the Pilgrims who landed on Plymouth Rock, Dec. 21, 1620, the founders of free institutions and the pioneers of religious liberty on this continent? In connection with the celebration of the tercentenary of this event, a propaganda of affirmation that is international in its scope has been in very active operation for some time. Long ago some one called Plymouth Rock "the Blarney Stone of New England." No better testimony to the aptness of this designation could be offered than the extravagances printed and spoken in the incidental details of this tercentenary jubilation and accepted as historical facts by the unthinking public.

Nothing could be further from the outstanding proofs of the parentage of the great fundamental principles of our national existence than that it can be attributed either to the Pilgrims or to Pilgrim New England. The Pilgrims were in advance of their age, it is true, but it was in selfishness, in intolerance, and in bigotry. An impartial, or even a merely superficial, glance at the distinctive characteristics of our early colonial legislation finds that New England was manifestly in advance of the other sections of the country in all that was intolerant and fanatical. In both characteristics New England stands alone and unrivaled. In the other Protestant colonies of New York, Virginia and South Carolina proscription for conscience sake was openly avowed and occasionally practised, but no such collection of laws as dominated the Pilgrim section were enacted by them. In the colony of Maryland there were none of these fanatical and intolerant codes as long as Catholic influence ruled. As soon as this influence was overthrown, however, the people who had been the first on this continent to ordain both civil and religious freedom became the victims of the most cruel and intolerant legislation inflicted on them by the very men they had sheltered and protected from New England persecution.

Nowadays nothing but the truth and the whole truth satisfies in historical assertion. So, since, under modern critical analysis, the Pilgrim phantoms conjured up for special entertainment vanish, it is attempted to create the conviction that it was not the Plymouth Pilgrims but the Massachusetts Colony Puritans that begot New England intolerance. On this effort to separate the two let the Oxford professor, M. A. Doyle, an intense anti-Catholic bigot, offer this conclusion which is quoted from his exhaustive three volume history, "English Colonies in America":

New England patriotism has woven out of the voyage and the first settlement of the so-called Pilgrims something like a sacred legend, in which every incident and personage is commemorated with loving fidelity. . . . The early history of New England is none too rich in picturesque and romantic incidents and thus the voyage of the Mayflower and the fortunes of those whom she bore have assumed a prominence perhaps far beyond the place which they fill in the eyes of their own generation. If we judge by actual and substantial results the settlement of Plymouth fell far short of the great movement ten years later. The origin of New England, as the living embodiment of certain political and religious principles, dates from the foundation of Massachusetts. The more vigorous life of the younger commonwealth overshadowed and in the long run swallowed up that of her older but weaker yoke-fellow; nor can it be fairly urged that Plymouth had either by example or otherwise much effect on Massachusetts. If the Plymouth settlement had never been made, the political life of New England would in all probability have taken the same form and the same course as it did.

THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT.

Of the Mayflower "compact," of which so much is now sought to be made, the same Professor Doyle says:

This set forth as the objects of the colony the glory of God, the advancement of the Christian faith and the honor of the King and the country of England. It went on to bind all those who signed it to submit to all such laws and ordinances as the community should from time to time enact. There is no reservation of conformity with the laws of England, nor is anything said as to the mode of legislation. The instrument was, in fact, nothing more than a general acknowledgment of the authority of the whole community over each of its individual members."

Immediately after their arrival in America these Pilgrims who had fled across the ocean because they had

felt the rod of religious persecution on their shoulders, became themselves the most stern and relentless persecutors. Washington Irving in his "History of New York" thus depicts them:

Having served a regular apprenticeship in the school of persecution it behooved them to show that they had become proficients in the art. They accordingly employed their leisure hours in banishing, scourging or hanging divers heretical Papists, Quakers, Anabaptists, for daring to abuse the liberty of conscience, which they now clearly proved to imply nothing more than that every man should think as he pleased in matters of religion, provided he thought right, for otherwise it would be giving a latitude of damnable heresies. Now as they were perfectly convinced that they alone thought right, it consequently followed that whoever thought differently from them thought wrong, and whoever thought wrong and obstinately persisted in not being convinced and converted, was a flagrant violator of the inestimable liberty of conscience and a corrupt and infectious member of the body politic and deserved to be lopped off and cast into the fire.

The laws which these alleged "founders" of our civil and religious liberty enacted in the General Courts of the several colonies had for their cardinal principle a complete theocracy. Every code is based on the doctrine of a union of Church and State, and "crimes" against religion were punished by rigid civil penalties, often wantonly cruel. Their idea of "civil liberty" can be estimated from this provision of the fundamental code:

None shall be admitted free men or free burgesses within their jurisdiction or any part of it, but such planters as are members of some one or other of the approved churches of New England; nor shall any such be chosen to magistracy, or to carry on any part of civil jurisdiction, or as deputies or assistants to have power, or vote in establishing laws, or in making or repealing orders to any chief military office or trust, nor shall any others but some such church members have any vote in any such elections.

What religious liberty meant is outlined in the decrees banishing the inoffensive Quakers, who if they did not at once comply faced this:

And it is further ordered that if any Quaker or Quakers shall presume, after they have once suffered that the law requireth to come into this jurisdiction, every such male Quaker shall for the first offense have one of his ears cut off and be kept at work in the house of correction till he can be sent away at his own charge; and for the second

offense shall have the other ear cut off, and kept at the house of correction as aforesaid. And every woman Quaker that hath suffered the law here that shall presume to come into this jurisdiction shall be severely whipped and kept at the house of correction at work, till she be sent away at her own charge, and so also for her coming again she shall be alike used as aforesaid. And for every Quaker, he or she, that shall a third time herein again offend, they shall have their tongues bored through with a hot iron, and be kept at the house of correction close at work, till they be sent away at their own charge.

After this exhibition it is not to be wondered at that the same code also ruled that, "No priest shall abide in this dominion; he shall be banished and suffer death on his return. Priests may be seized by anyone without a warrant."

Contrast this with the record made in the Catholic Colony of Maryland, where the Governor, in his oath of office, swore: "I will not by myself, or any other, directly or indirectly molest any person professing to believe in Jesus Christ for or in respect of religion." And the colonial assembly, of which the majority was composed of Catholics, in its "Act Concerning Religion," provided (1649) that "no person whatsoever professing to believe in Jesus Christ shall be molested for or in respect of his or her religion or the free exercise thereof."

CONTRAST OF CATHOLIC LIBERALITY.

Bancroft, writing of the Catholic founder of the Maryland colony, declares:

Calvert deserves to be ranked among the most wise and benevolent law-givers of all ages. He was the first in the history of the Christian world to seek for religious security and place by the practice of justice, and not by the exercise of power; to plan the establishment of popular institutions with the enjoyment of liberty of conscience. . . . Every other country in the world had persecution laws. The Roman Catholics who were oppressed by the laws of England were sure to find a peaceful asylum in the quiet harbors of the Chesapeake; and there, too, the Protestants were sheltered against Protestant intolerance.

And Lecky, confirming this, adds:

Hopital and Lord Baltimore were the first two legislators who uniformly upheld religious liberty when in power; and Maryland continued the solitary refuge of the oppressed of every sect until the Puritans succeeded in subverting the Catholic rule, when they basely enacted the whole penal

code against those who so nobly and so generously received them.

The historian of Maryland, McMahon, also says: "While we would avoid all invidious contrasts and forget the stern spirit of the Puritan which so frequently mistook religious intolerance for holy zeal, we can turn with exultation to the Pilgrims of Maryland as the founders of religious liberty in the New World. They erected the first altar to it on this continent."

Not to the narrow, fanatical New England religious oligarchy, but to the Catholic Governor, Thomas Dongan, of New York, also must be given the credit of asserting for the first time in American history the right of the people to participate in their own government which is the foundation of our entire political establishment. This he did in his Charter of Liberties passed by the Provincial Assembly of 1683, which enacted that the supreme legislative authority "shall forever be and reside in a Governor, Council and the people met in General Assembly." In no other colonial records are the words "people met in General Assembly" to be found. In Massachusetts for half a century the magistrates and the clergy constituted the governing class in the religious autocratic tyranny in which the right of suffrage was restricted by the religious test. New England reincarnated the spirit of Cromwell. No such elements could produce or foster the civil and religious liberty we now enjoy.

Daniel Webster, on June 17, 1843, delivered his famous speech, at the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, in which he indulged in somewhat similar eulogies of the Pilgrim Fathers and their Puritan descendants as are now being circulated. The great Archbishop Martin J. Spalding in one of his masterful essays tore these historical sophistries to pieces and then summed up in a characterization that we also can adopt for present use:

We would deem it unjust to the memory of the Puritans who settled New England to say that they had no good qualities whatever, or even that their vices very greatly preponderated over their virtues. Faults they certainly had, faults as grievous as they were notorious and clearly marked. But they had excellencies also, which should be taken into the account in the estimate of their character. They were bold, daring, courageous, industrious, sober, enterprising, and

religious after their own fashion. With an arduous mission to accomplish, they shrank not from the difficulties which encompassed them. Trained in the painful school of suffering and privation and possessed of iron nerve, they were discouraged by no reverses, appalled by no dangers. Men of less sternness of purpose would have given up the undertaking upon which they embarked as utterly impracticable. They, however, never lost hope of a favorable issue; and with an elasticity of character which does them honor, they surmounted obstacles, even as a ship rides the waves which threaten to engulf it in the abyss. And they have bequeathed this same enterprising and indomitable spirit to their children.

This much we say in their praise. But when this is said, all is told. Their faults stood forth at least as prominent as their virtues. They were narrow-minded, proscriptive, and short-sighted in their character, and in the whole line of their conduct and policy. In temporal matters they sacrificed everything to their own paltry interests.

That their narrow-minded, proscriptive spirit lived after them, New England's history loudly proclaims. It was the inspiration of the outburst against the "Quebec Act" of 1774 giving Canadian Catholics the right to practise their religion; and this manifestation of anti-Catholic prejudice by the *Bostonais* lost Canada for the Continental cause. It was the same spirit that inspired the mob to sack and burn the Ursuline convent under the very shadow of Bunker Hill in 1834. No thanks are due to Puritan influence that better ideals of legislation and more liberal principles now obtain in New England. The change was forced not by Puritans but in spite of them. The advent of new races, new creeds, new ideals had left them in a discredited minority and forced the amelioration it would have been vain in them to have attempted either to resist or control.

The Lesson of Bethlehem

WHAT the birth of the Blessed Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, has meant to the whole world is written in the hearts of men, and made manifest by the re-creation of the world He came to save. He restored man to the sonship of God, making him an heir of Heaven. He preached a religion of the heart, of dependence upon Almighty God, in faith, in hope, and in

charity. He taught us all without distinction to call God our Father, thereby impressing the great lesson that, before God, there is no distinction of Jew or Gentile, of pauper or prince, of rich or poor, but that all are brethren, since all are children of the one Father in Heaven. In these lessons, unknown to the practice of the wisest paganism, has the history of the world since His coming been written. Without Jesus Christ that history is without meaning.

The Christian world kneels in adoration at the Crib of the Infant Saviour. At the Crib is found the lesson that has a special significance to us who are citizens of this great country. It is the lesson of subjection; not the subjection that weighed so heavily before His coming, but the subjection made sweet and noble by the example of Christ. Wrapped in the swaddling clothes that bind Omnipotence the Child of Bethlehem teaches us subjection to all lawful authority. He teaches it by His whole life. He came among us a Child, with all the subjection implied in childhood. In subjection to the will of His Father He took upon Himself the burden of our mortal frame. He went down to Nazareth in subjection to Mary, His Immaculate Mother, and Joseph, His own creatures, yet placed over Him in a position of authority. He taught by word and example, in the course of His public life, subjection to all officials of the State, who had power given them from on high. To heal broken bodies, to win souls for God, He subjected Himself to toil and weariness, as in His journeys His blessed feet pressed the rough highways of Judea. His inspiring life brings before us in precept and in deed the threefold subjection of the Christian: first, subjection to God and His law; next, subjection to all who are our rightful temporal rulers, and, finally, the loving subjection of ourselves to our brethren in giving them the willing, Christ-like service of charity.

By the Providence of God we are citizens of a republic dedicated to true liberty. By that same good Providence we have never doubted that liberty, in its most precious form, cannot long endure unless it is based on the threefold subjection preached with Divine eloquence from the Crib at Bethlehem. More blessed than other

nations, we have learned that liberty is not license, but the freedom to do those things that are good. We know that rights connote duties, and that the most firm bond of society is that charity which does not merely safeguard the rights of our neighbor, but induces us unselfishly to hold his interests as sacred as our own. May God, the loving Father of all, grant that this our knowledge and our persuasion may never fall away in this land of liberty, where on Christmas Day millions of Americans fall down in adoration before their God and Saviour, a little Child in subjection, in the Crib at Bethlehem.

Origin of the Christmas Crib

AMONG the favorite spots to which St. Francis of Assisi used to retire at times was one at Monte Rainerio, in the valley of Rieti, now called Fonte Colombo, and it was here he was staying shortly after his return from Rome, in 1223. Christmas was drawing near, and he had a great wish to celebrate it at Greccio, which is not far from Monte Rainerio, where the Franciscans had a hermitage; so he sent for his friend, Giovanni de Velita, who lived there, and who had been a great friend of the Order and had given the land for the hermitage at Greccio. St. Francis told him of his plans and his idea of a memorial of the Child of Bethlehem, which would make the Nativity of Our Lord seem more real to the poor and, therefore, increase devotion to the Infant Saviour. St. Francis had been in the Holy Land a few years before, where he acquired a great devotion to the Christmas Mystery. Giovanni was to go on ahead and have a stable and manger built in the wood near the hermitage. St. Francis then sent word to the people in the valley nearby to join him at Greccio to celebrate the Christmas festival.

On Christmas Eve, when the time for Midnight Mass drew near, the people arrived, carrying lighted torches as they climbed up the mountain side. They assembled before the stable, where the figures of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, and the shepherds and the ox and the ass,

were grouped about the Infant Jesus in the manger. What a beautiful sight it was, as the light from the numerous torches fell upon the group of the Holy Family.

St. Francis was deacon at the Mass, and preached a sermon on the Nativity of Our Lord, which touched the hearts of all his hearers. So real did it all seem to the people that they felt as if they were in another Bethlehem.

Devotion to the crib has since spread throughout the Christian world. Yearly, from the eve of Christmas to the day of the octave of the Epiphany, a crib, representing the birthplace of Christ, is shown in Catholic churches, in order to remind the Faithful of the mystery of the Incarnation and to recall, according to tradition and the Gospel narrative, the historical events connected with the Birth of the Redeemer.

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